Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* depicts the cruel and horrifying tolls slavery had on the African American community through the experiences of the main character, Sethe, and her family. Although this novel was neither written during the time of slavery nor in the early slavery abolishment period it is set in that time period. Morrison goes into great detail to create vivid textual imagery in order to convey to the reader the gravity of the situation each character is subjected to. Sethe, who was born into slavery, experienced both mental and emotional abuse in addition to physical abuse while at Sweet Home. The psychological trauma Sethe suffered could be a justifying factor for the later questionable choices she makes throughout the novel.

*Beloved* has many major themes throughout the novel one of them being religion and spirituality. Historically, religion and spirituality has played a major role in both the white and the African American community, which are the two subset demographics featured in the novel. Specifically in *Beloved* Baby Suggs is an unofficially acclaimed spiritual leader. But at the end her life she became depressed and lost the will to preach. Throughout the novel there are many references to biblical terms, the most common the word “holy”. One textual example of the importance of religion is, “Other than that, he would rely on the power of Jesus Christ to deal with things older, but not stronger, than He Himself was.” This was a quote taken from Stamp Paid’s reflection of the wrong he committed against Baby Suggs when he told Paul D about Sethe’s past. Another textual example of biblical reference being used in Beloved is the quote “When the four horsemen came-school teacher, one nephew, one slave catcher and a sheriff- the house on Bluestone Road was so quiet they thought they were too late.” Toni Morrison used the vision of the four men, who were coming for Sethe, to allude to the biblical reference of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. She might have used this reference to give us as the readers some insight of how Sethe viewed those men the day she tried to kill all her children.

From an analytical viewpoint, the belief in God and adoption of the Christianity as a religion by the African American community was a way for slaves to create some sense of social normality. But from a historical viewpoint slaves like Sethe, Paul D, and Stamp Paid did not consciously adopt certain aspects of Christianity, like its terminology on their own. Christianity, which is commonly referred to as European descended belief, would have most likely been taught to incoming slaves and as time went on cultural assimilation would have occurred making Christianity and its terminology more prevalent in the new generations of African Americans that were born into slavery. From a psychological viewpoint, most slaves were exposed to deplorable living conditions, abuse, and hazardous working environments that would be to detrimental to their mental health. It can be interpreted that by slaves adopting a religion that has a higher power, even higher than their master’s power over them, which promises a immortal life of salvation and peace after death would bring some comfort to the slaves how were indentured into a life of servitude. Whichever viewpoint you use religion and spirituality was a major theme in *Beloved*.

Another major theme that Beloved highlighted was “race superiority”. Throughout the novel the lingering power the white man had over the African American community was obvious and created a deep ceded mental retaliation which was illustrated by Sethe. One way Sethe exhibited this mental retaliation was when she refused to move from 124 even though she observed the negative effects the haunting by her dead daughter’s spirit was having on both her and her family. Sethe justification for not wanting to leave 124 was because she was “not running anymore”. Sethe being an escaped slave had gone through many traumas all which were inflicted by her owners. Once Sethe escaped she must have felt some sense of liberation and was not going to let anyone have that kind of power over her again. Even though Sethe may not realize it she is still being controlled in some way by the concept of “race superiority”. Sethe is letting her past experiences shape her future. It is because Sethe’s white owners affected her so much mentally why she is refusing to leave 124, she does not want to feel the way she did at Sweet Home again.

In conclusion, we see many major themes at play in *Beloved* which includes race superiority, religion, and spirituality. *Beloved* portrays the many effects slavery had on the African American community mainly through each situation the novel’s characters went through. For each major theme in Beloved there are many viewpoints, and although all are valid together they paint a clearer literary image to the effects of slavery.